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061108Z Jan 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000016

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/14

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 001 (01/06/04)

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD FOR REASONS 1.5
b and d.

CONTENTS: POSSIBLE OPENING OF JAFFNA LIBRARY?
- PRESIDENT GAYOOM RUSHES HOME FROM SAARC
- TAMIL PARTY RAISES ISSUE OF LTTE SECESSION
- UNP CHAIRMAN ON COHABITATION

POSSIBLE OPENING OF JAFFNA LIBRARY?

1. (C) FYI. During a January 5 meeting with the Ambassador (see Septel), Hindu Affairs Minister T. Maheswaran mentioned that the long-delayed reopening of the rebuilt Jaffna Library may quietly take place in the next two to three weeks. (Early in 2003, the Tigers made clear that they did not want the library to reopen, thwarting GSL plans to take credit for the reconstruction effort with a large rededication ceremony.) Although Maheswaran is close to the Tigers, it remains unclear to us whether the LTTE is now on board for the quiet reopening he mentioned. The Minister responded positively to the Ambassador's offer of a possible "American Corners" section for the library. (POL)

PRESIDENT GAYOOM RUSHES HOME FROM SAARC

2. (C) FYI. We understand that Maldivian President Gayoom had to leave the SAARC summit in Islamabad quite suddenly on Monday, January 5. Various rumors are flying around as to why. We checked with Male'-based UNDP Country Representative Min Pham (Amcit -- please protect), who told us that one rumor is that Gayoom left due to a worsening in the political situation. Pham said there's yet another rumor that it was only a family wedding that prompted his early departure. It's also rumored that Gayoom's son Farish Maumoon is in trouble, possibly in scandalous ways involving corruption and drug use.

3. (C) In other Maldives-related news, POL is planning to meet with representatives of the anti-Gayoom Maldivian Democratic Party (MDD) (mentioned in 03 Colombo 2201) soon. The party is based outside of the Maldives where political parties are prohibited by the GoRM. The MDD reps contacted the Pol Section and we think it's wise to hear what the group is about. (POL)

TAMIL PARTY RAISES ISSUE OF LTTE SECESSION

4. (C) FYI. At its annual convention held on January 4 in the northern city of Jaffna, the pro-Tiger All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) declared that the "The Tamil people will have to exercise their right to self determination and secede if the political impasse in Colombo were to continue," according to a report on pro-Tiger website "TamilNet." Also at the convention, A. Vinayagamoorthy and G. Ponnambalam were re-elected as president and secretary of the party, respectively. Both men, who are TNA MPs, are known to be very pro-Tiger. We had seen a recent email and attachment from the desk that mentioned the theoretical possibility of the Tigers seceding some time down the road if the impasse continues, based on comments made in Prabhakaran's so-called "Heroes' Day" address. We wanted to flag the related communication from this, Sri Lanka's oldest Tamil party, and ask if the desk had heard anything else re this matter. Other than the ACTC mention, we've only heard slight whisperings on this issue. (POL)

UNP CHAIRMAN ON COHABITATION

5. (C) FYI. On January 5, we spoke with United National Party (UNP) chairman Malik Samarawickrama, who has been the PM's key representative on the joint committee discussing cohabitation issues. Samarawickrama mentioned the following:

-- The Samarawickrama-Tittawella committee has "no immediate plans to meet."

-- When Manu Tittawella returns to Sri Lanka around January 10 from an overseas trip, it is possible there will be another round of meetings, but that is not confirmed.

-- Malik said he was "always hopeful" about the cohabitation situation, but not convinced it could be worked out. He did not elaborate on any other options the PM may or may not be considering.

We flag Samarawickrama's comments because we have seen some press pieces and other material in which representatives of the PM and the President variously state that the committee is definitely set to meet. Sararawickrama did not confirm that. (POL)

LUNSTEAD